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On anniversary of its veto, Sen. Toy announces reintroduction of DWSD oversight bill

LANSING – Continuing her fight to bring fair water rates to suburban Detroit customers, Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, will reintroduce legislation calling for a regional water authority that would oversee rate-setting by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department.

“Two years ago, the governor dashed the hopes of countless suburban residents seeking fair representation in the water rate setting process by vetoing Senate Bill 195, which would have given them a real voice in determining rate approval and contracts,” Toy said. “Today, suburban customers continue to be at the mercy of DWSD. This is intolerable.”

Toy has continued to work closely with the Southeast Michigan Consortium for Water Quality and its creator, Judge John Feikens, to bring about change at DWSD – particularly its governing structure – yet little has changed.

Sen. Toy agrees with Judge Feikens, who Gov. Granholm designated as the go-to person in dealing with problems at DWSD, in expressing the need for a regional authority, saying the current system does not give suburban customers enough say in the operations of the water system. Toy’s bill will be the first step in making a regional authority a reality.

The new bill is nearly identical to Senate Bill 195, Sen. Toy’s original bill, which was vetoed by Gov. Granholm March 21, 2003. Changes have been made to address technical concerns raised in the governor’s veto message.

“In light of rising costs, the department’s ability to demonstrate reliability and accountability is critical to regaining the public’s trust,” Toy said.

Legislation has been introduced as far back as 1983 to address suburban ratepayer concerns over lack of meaningful representation on the water board. Many times the legislation has been stopped by representatives from the city of Detroit with promises of reform and greater representation for suburban ratepayers, yet double-digit increases have continued and claims of mismanagement of the system have only grown louder.

The new bill is expected to be introduced in the Michigan Senate this week.

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